

What Just Happened in Syria. Momentous Implications Far Bigger than the Attacks Themselves

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What happened right after the second direct U.S.-missiles invasion of Syria, which had occurred on the night of April 13th, could turn out to have momentous implications — far bigger than the attacks themselves.

The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons headlined on April 14th, in the wake of this U.S.-UK-France invasion of Syria that was allegedly punishing Syria's Government for allegedly having used chemical weapons in its bombing in the town of Douma on April 7th, "[OPCW Fact-Finding Mission Continues Deployment to Syria](#)", and reported that:

The Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) team of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) will continue its deployment to the Syrian Arab Republic to establish facts around the allegations of chemical weapons use in Douma.

The OPCW has been working in close collaboration with the United Nations Department of Safety and Security to assess the situation and ensure the safety of the team.

This means that [the effort by the U.S. and its allies on the U.N. Security Council, to squash that investigation](#), has failed at the OPCW, even though [the effort had been successful at blocking U.N. support for that specific investigation](#).

The OPCW is not part of the U.N., nor of any country; it, instead (as introduced by [Wikipedia](#)):

is an intergovernmental organisation and the implementing body for the Chemical Weapons Convention, which entered into force on 29 April 1997. The OPCW, with its 192 member states, has its seat in The Hague, Netherlands, and oversees the global endeavour for the permanent and verifiable elimination of chemical weapons.

In conformity with the unchallenged international consensus that existed during the 1990s that there was no longer any basis for war between the world's major powers, the Convention sought and achieved a U.N. imprimatur, but this was only in order to increase its

respect throughout the world. The OPCW is based not on the U.N. Charter but on that specific treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention, which was [formally approved by the U.N.'s General Assembly on 30 November 1992](#) and was then opened for signatures in Paris on 13 January 1993. According to the Convention's terms, it would enter into effect 180 days after 65 nations signed it, which turned out to be on 29 April 1997.

So, although the treaty itself received U.N. approval, the recent Russian-sponsored resolution at the U.N.'s Security Council to have the U.N. endorse the OPCW's investigation of the 7 April 2018 Douma incident, did not receive U.N. approval. It was instead [blocked by the U.S. and its allies](#). Nonetheless, though without a U.N. endorsement, the OPCW investigation into the incident will move forward, despite the invasion. This fact is momentous, because a credible international inspection, by the world's top investigatory agency for such matters, will continue to completion, notwithstanding the effort by the U.S. and its allies on the U.N. Security Council, to block it altogether. This decision was reached by the OPCW — not by the U.N.

Among [the 192 signers of the Chemical Weapons Convention](#) are U.S., Russia, and Syria, as well as China, Iran, and Iraq, but not Israel, nor North Korea and a very few other countries. So: all of the major powers have already, in advance, approved whatever the findings by the OPCW turn out to be. Those findings are expected to determine whether a chemical attack happened in Douma on 7 April 2018, and, if so, then perhaps what the specific banned chemical(s) was(were), but not necessarily who was responsible for it if it existed. For example, if the 'rebels' had stored some of their chemical weapons at that building and then Syria's Government bombed that building, the OPCW might not be able to determine who is to blame, even if they do determine that there was a chemical attack and the chemical composition of it. In other words: science cannot necessarily answer all of the questions that might be legal-forensically necessary in order to determine guilt, if a crime did, in fact, occur, there.

If the investigation does find that a banned chemical was used and did cause injuries or fatalities, then there is the possibility that its findings will be consistent with the assertions by the U.S. and its allies who participated in the April 13th invasion. That would not necessarily justify the invasion, but it would prove the possibility that there had been no lying intent on the part of the U.S.-and-allied invaders on April 13th.

However, if the investigation does *not* find that a banned chemical was used in the Syrian Government's bombing of that building, then incontrovertibly the U.S.-and-allied invasion was a criminal one under international laws, though there may be no international court that possesses the authority to try the case.

So: what is at stake here from the OPCW investigation is not only the international legitimacy of Syria's Government, but the international legitimacy of the Governments that invaded it on April 13th. These are extremely high stakes, even if no court in the world will possess the authority to adjudicate the guilt — either if the U.S. and its allies lied, or if the Syrian Government lied.

For us historians, this is very important. And, for the general public, the significance goes much farther: to specific Governments, to their alleged news media, and to the question of: What does it even mean to say that a government is a "democracy" or a "dictatorship"? **The findings from this investigation will reverberate far and wide, and long (if World War III doesn't prevent any such findings at all).**

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